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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT Wednesday, December 19, 1934.

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Subject: "Christmas Trees." Information from the Forest Service, U.S.D.A.

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Guess who the new recruits in the ranks of Santa Claus' helpers are this year. Well, surprising as this news may sound, they're the CCC boys. You see, during the past months many of these boys have had the job of cutting Christmas trees. Many of the trees that will cheer our homes this Christmas will have come straight from their hands. And they've been doing this cutting not simply to help Santa Claus but chiefly to help our forests.

You know, we've been hearing so much about the ruthless and destructive cutting of fine trees at this time of year that some of us have come to the conclusion that perhaps for the sake of our forests all good citizens should give up the old custom of having a Christmas tree. But the Forest Service sends out word that there's a good and bad side to the Christmas tree picture. The cutting may be wasteful, and then again it may be helpful, all depending on how the trees are cut and where and why.

I think you'll be interested in knowing just which Christmas trees the forest experts approve of. Well, they approve of the small trees cut out in forests where growth is too thick for the health of all, where thinning is necessary to give sturdy trees a better chance. Christmas tree cutting in this way is a real help to the forest. Each year the rangers in our National forests oversee this helpful type of Christmas-tree cutting.
Forest workers cut, sort, and tag these trees, and the Government then sells them for a small amount. Buyers pay only a few cents for small trees, more for larger ones. These national-forest Christmas trees all are labeled with an official red tag which says: "This tree brings a Christmas message from the great outdoors. Its cutting was not destructive but gave needed room for neighboring trees to grow faster and better. Prevention of forest fires saved this tree for your home on Christmas Day."

So, if you buy a tree tagged with one of these official Forest Service cards, you'll know that you've had a share in helping the good work for our forest

Well, there's one kind of Christmas tree that the Forest Service approves. The second is a tree raised for that purpose. Farmers in certain parts of the country are learning that growing Christmas trees as a crop is a profitable side-line. It's a source of cash return and also means utilizing waste land on the farm. The Forest Service authorities say that such production combines well with

forest planting for timber. And they suggest that for Christmas tree plantations the spruce, the true fir, the Douglas fir, the deodar and the eastern red cedar are all good choices.

Just as an illustration of this kind of crop, perhaps you'll be interested in a story from New York State. Ten years ago the farm bureaus of that State, aided by the State conservation department, started to establish forest plantations on bits of unused farm lands. Farmers set out hundreds of pine and spruce plantations, many of them, fortunately, along well-travelled highways. Now, handsome patches of green dot the landscape and add to the beauty of the highways. Moreover, most of these trees are now six to ten feet high -- or about the right size for sale as Christmas trees. A ten-year period isn't long in the life of a growing forest, yet these trees averaged about one foot of height-growth a year.

Forest experts think the demand for plantation grown Christmas trees will increase in the future. You see, a shapely home-grown tree in so many ways is better than one shipped from a distance. If cut and delivered promptly a short time before Christmas, it will hold its fragrance and foliage all through the holiday season whereas the shipped-in tree is likely to shed its needles very soon after it comes into a warm room.

But farmers raising a crop of Christmas trees needn't wait even as long as ten years to make a sale. Many people these days are buying little growing trees for table use at Christmas as well as these larger cut trees. Many people like little potted trees to use as decorations indoors during the holidays and then to set out to grow in their own yard afterwards. In future holidays these growing trees may be dressed up for outdoor decoration. And these little table trees will be ready for sale from one to three years after planting.

Still another point that the forest experts make in favor of growing trees as a business is that the crop isn't perishable, so you can hold it over from one year to the next, and you only need to cut trees as you have orders for them. But the Forest Service warns farmers who are thinking of going into the Christmas tree growing business that they ought to make sure of a good local market for their trees first.

Well, we hope that one of these days only approved Christmas trees will be on the market. Some states interested in saving their evergreens -- Colorado, for example -- issue tags for all trees cut under approved conditions -- either natural-grown trees or those from Christmas-tree plantations.

You see what a different picture this is from the present one. Today natural-grown trees, harvested from the large timberlands of the North and West, supply most of the city demand for Yule trees. These trees, cut weeks and even months before Christmas, are bundled tightly together and shipped long distances to market. They naturally don't arrive in your home in fresh condition. Many of them suffer damage in transit. And even more of them go to waste when they arrive at their destination for lack of buyers.

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